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IN HONOR OF VACLAV HAVEL AND
THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF
CHARTER 77

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, Edmond Burke once said that, "all it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." Thirty years ago, good men and women came together, and together, they ultimately triumphed over evil.

In 1987, I traveled to Czechoslovakia with a Helsinki Commission delegation led by my good friend, STENY HOYER, who was then Chairman of the Commission. We traveled there just ten years after the Charter 77 movement had been formed and, amazingly, in spite of persecution and imprisonment, they had managed to publish 350 documents during its first ten years. And it was clear during my visit to Prague that this organization was having an impact, especially when the communist authorities went to the trouble of preventing five independent activists, including Vaclav Havel, from meeting with us.

In spite of this, our delegation was able to meet with several other Charter 77 signatories and sympathizers: Libuse Silhanova, Josef Vohryzek, Father Vaclav Maly, Zdenek Urbanek, and Rita Klimova. Libuse Silhanova, then serving as a Charter 77 spokesperson, described her fellow Chartists as "ordinary people who happen to be part of a movement." For a group of "ordinary people," they certainly accomplished extraordinary things.

One of the most notable of these "ordinary people" was the playwright Vaclav Havel, who is today the sole surviving member of Charter 77's first three spokespersons. At a time when most Czechoslovaks preferred to keep their heads low, he held his up. When others dared not speak out, he raised up his voice. While others hid from communism in their apartments and weekend cottages, he faced it down in prison.

In 1978, Havel wrote a seminal essay entitled, "The Power of the Powerless." In it, he proposed a remarkably conspiratorial concept: the idea that those repressed by the Communist Lie actually had the power to "live for truth," and that by doing so, they could change the world in which they live.

One of the people who read this essay was Zbigniew Bujak, who became a leading Solidarity activist in Poland. Bujak described the impact of Havel's message:

This essay reached us in the Ursus factory in 1979 at a point when we felt we were at the end of the road. Inspired by KOR [the Polish Workers' Defense Committee, which preceded Solidarity], we had been speaking on the shop floor, talking to people, participating in public meetings, trying to speak the truth about the factory, the country, and politics. There came a moment when people thought we were crazy. Why were we doing this? Why were we taking such risks? Not seeing any immediate and tangible results,

we began to doubt the purposefulness of what we were doing. Shouldn't we be coming up with other methods, other ways?

Then came the essay by Havel. Reading it gave us the theoretical underpinnings for our activity. It maintained our spirits; we did not give up, and a year later—in August 1980—it became clear that the party apparatus and the factory management were afraid of us. We mattered. And the rank and file saw us as leaders of the movement. When I look at the victories of Solidarity, and of Charter 77, I see in them an astonishing fulfillment of the prophecies and knowledge contained in Havel's essay.

Vaclav Havel's essay was not just the product of clever wordsmithing; it was an act of singular heroism. In fact, shortly after writing "The Power of the Powerless," Vaclav Havel found himself in prison, again. And it should be remembered that others, including philosopher Jan Patocka, Havel's close friend, and Pavel Wonka, paid with their lives for their opposition to the Czechoslovak communist regime.

Vaclav Havel is a man who has always been guided by the courage of his convictions. Remarkably, his courage did not fade upon his assumption of the presidency. Indeed, he is all the more heroic for his steadfast commitment to human rights even from the Prague Castle. From the beginning, he was a voice of reason, not revenge, as he addressed his country's communist and totalitarian past. In 1993, he rightly identified the situation of Roma as "a litmus test for civil society." And not only has he raised human rights issues in his own country but reminds the world of the abuses taking place in Cuba and China.

Throughout his presidency, he pardoned those faced with criminal charges under communist-era laws that restrict free speech. In 2001, he spoke out against the parliament's regressive religion law, which turned the clock back on religious freedom. And he has reminded other world leaders of our shared responsibility for the poor and less fortunate the world over.

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the founding of Charter 77, I want to join my colleagues from the Helsinki Commission in honoring Vaclav Havel and all the men and women who signed the Charter, who supported its goals, and who helped bring democracy to Czechoslovakia.

RECOGNIZING SHAUN ANDREW
ROBINSON FOR ACHIEVING THE
RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Shaun Andrew Robinson, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 374, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Shaun has been very active with his troop, participating in many Scout activities. Over the years Shaun has been involved with Scouting, he has earned 30 merit badges and held numerous leadership positions, serving as patrol leader, assistant patrol leader, chaplain's aid, and den chief. He is a member of the Tribe of Mic-O-Say.

Shaun's dedication to his school work and church are outstanding. Shaun works hard in school, while being an active member of the Liberty United Methodist Church. He has also contributed significantly to the community by using his leadership skills to lead a group of boys and adults in completing a landscaping project at the Liberty United Methodist Church.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Shaun Andrew Robinson for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF TOM
MOONEY

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Tom Mooney and his accomplishments as a champion of public education, the labor movement and social justice. A sudden and tragic loss for education advocates, Tom's December 9, 2006 passing also marks a sad day for the State of Ohio.

Tom began his career as a teacher in 1972 in Cincinnati. Quickly, though, his natural leadership brought him to represent his fellow educators as the president of the Local 1520 of the American Federation of Teachers between 1979 and 2000. During that time, he forged a reputation as a tireless and outspoken proponent of ensuring funding for public schools. Through his work with the Federation, he eventually rose to become the vice president of the national organization and served on its executive board.

A man of candor and American moxie, Tom's aggressive and enthusiastic public defense of teachers was an ongoing testament to his dedication to the idea that education is a fundamental and essential human right. Tom firmly believed that the success of the public education system rests on the will of the people to uphold its standards. Often, this meant challenging the status quo. Tom was not afraid to push forward and vehemently fight for higher standards and a higher quality of education. His strength, conviction, and outright courage to stand up steadfastly for the rights of educators have led to vast improvements in the field of education for the State of Ohio and the country.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, please join me in recognizing the life of Tom Mooney for his exemplary dedication to public education and the labor movement. Tom will be missed.

TRIBUTE TO CLARENCE SEEVERS

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to recognize a gentleman in our district, Mr. Clarence Seavers of Sandusky, OH, who will be presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Erie County Democratic Party on February 23, 2007. Our former